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n.p., after 1936
t.ms., 10 pp.
(Some biographical information, but mainly on his various discoveries)

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After 1936

At the close of 1889, having worked one year in the shops of George Westinghouse, Pittsburgh, I experienced so great a longing for resuming my interrupted investigations that, notwithstanding a very tempting proposition by him, I left for New York to take up my laboratory work. But owing to pressing demands by several foreign scientific societies I made a trip to Europe where I lectured before the Institution of Electrical Engineers and Royal Institution in London and the Societe de Physique in Paris. After this and a brief visit to my home in Yugoslavia I returned to this country in 1892 eager to devote myself to the subject of predilection of my thoughts: the study of the universe.

During the succeeding two years of intense concentration I was fortunate enough to make two far-reaching discoveries. The first was a dynamic theory of gravity, which I have worked out in all details and hope to give to the world very soon. It explains the causes of this force and the motions of heavenly bodies under its influence so satisfactorily that it will put an end to idle speculations and false conceptions, as that of curved space. According to the relativists, space has a tendency to curvature owing to an inherent property or presence of celestial bodies. Granting a semblance of reality to this fantastic idea, it is still self-contradictory. Every action is accompanied by an equivalent reaction and the effects of the latter are directly opposite to those of the former.

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Supposing that the bodies act upon the surrounding space causing curvatures of the same, it appears to my simple mind that the curved spaces must react on the bodies and, producing the opposite effects, straighten out the curves. Since action and reaction are co-existent, it follows that the supposed curvature of space is entirely impossible. But even if it existed it would not explain the motions of the bodies as observed. Only the existence of a field of force can account for them and its assumption dispenses with space curvature. All literature on this subject is futile and destined to oblivion. So are also all attempts to explain the workings of the universe without recognizing the existence of the ether and the indispensable function it plays in the phenomena.

My second discovery was a physical truth of the greatest importance. As I have searched the scientific records in more than a half dozen languages for a long time without finding the least anticipation, I consider myself the original discoverer of this truth, which can be expressed by the statement: There is no energy in matter other than that received from the environment. On my 75th birthday I made a brief reference to it, but its meaning and significance have become clearer to me since then. It applies rigorously to molecules and atoms as well as to the largest heavenly bodies, and to all matter in the universe in any phase of its existence from its very formation to its ultimate disintegration.

Being perfectly satisfied that all energy in matter is drawn from the environment, it was quite natural that when radioactivity was discovered in 1896 I immediately started a search for the external agent which caused it. The existence of radioactivity was positive proof of the existence of external rays. I had previously investigated various terrestrial disturbances affecting wireless circuits but none of them or any others emanating from the earth could produce a steady sustained action and I was driven to the conclusion that the activating rays were of cosmic origin. This fact I announced in my papers on Roentgen rays and Radiations contributed to the Electrical Review of New York, in 1897. However, as radioactivity was observed equally well in other widely separated parts of the world, it was obvious that the rays must be impinging on the earth from all directions. Now, of all bodies in the Cosmos, our sun was most likely to furnish a clue as to their origin and character. Before the electron theory was advanced, I had established that radioactive rays consisted of particles of primary matter not further decomposeable, and the first question to answer was whether the sun is charged to a sufficiently high potential to project such particles and produce the effects noted. This called for a prolonged investigation which culminated in my finding that the sun's potential was 216 billions of volts and that all such large and hot heavenly bodies emit cosmic rays. Through

further solar research and observation of Novae this has been proved conclusively, and to deny it would be like denying the light and heat of the suns. Nevertheless, there are still some doubters who prefer to shroud the cosmic rays in deep mystery. One of them declared recently that they must come from very remote regions in which matter is converted into energy. I am sure that this is not true for there is no place where such a process occurs in this or any other universe beyond our ken.

A few words will be sufficient in support of this contention. The kinetic and potential energy of a body is the result of motion and determined by the product of its mass and the square of velocity. Let the mass be reduced, the energy is diminished in the same proportion. If it be reduced to zero the energy is likewise zero for any finite velocity. In other words, it is absolutely impossible to convert mass into energy. It would be different if there were forces in nature capable of imparting to a mass infinite velocity. Then the product of zero mass with the square of infinite velocity would represent infinite energy. But we know that there are no such forces and the idea that mass is convertible into energy is rank nonsense.

While the origin and character of the rays observed near the earth's surface are sufficiently well ascertained, the so-called cosmic rays observed at great altitudes presented

a riddle for more than 26 years, chiefly because it was found that they increased with altitude at a rapid rate. My investigations have brought out the astonishing fact that the effects at high altitudes are of an entirely different nature, having no relation whatever to cosmic rays. These are particles of matter projected from celestial bodies at very high temperature and charged to enormous electric potentials. The effects at great elevations, on the other hand, are due to waves of extremely small lengths produced by the sun in a certain region of the atmosphere. This is the discovery which I wish to make known. The process involved in the generation of the waves is the following: The sun projects charged particles constituting an electric current which passes through a conducting stratum of the atmosphere approximately 10 kilometers thick enveloping the earth. That is a transmission of energy exactly as I illustrated in my experimental lectures in which one end of a wire is connected to an electric generator of high potential, its other end being free. In this case the generator is represented by the sun and the wire by the conducting air. The passage of the solar current involves the transference of electric charges from particle to particle with the speed of light, this resulting in the production of extremely short and

penetrating waves. As the air stratum mentioned is the source of the waves it follows that the so-called cosmic rays observed at great altitudes must increase as this stratum is approached. My researches and calculations have brought to light the following facts in this connection: (1) the intensity of the so-called cosmic rays must be greatest in the zenithal portion of the atmosphere; (2) the intensity should increase more and more rapidly up to an elevation of about 20 kilometers where the conducting air stratum begins; (3) from there on the intensity should fall, first slowly and then more rapidly, to an insignificant value at an altitude of about 30 kilometers; (4) the display of high potential must occur on the free end of the terrestrial wire, that is to say, on the side turned away from the sun. The current from the latter is supplied at a pressure of about 216 billion volts and there is a difference of 2 billion volts between the illuminated and the dark side of the globe. The energy of this current is so great that it readily accounts for the auroras and other phenomena observed in the atmosphere and at the earth's surface.

For the time being I must content myself with the announcement of the salient facts, but in due course I expect to be able to give more or less accurate technical

data relating to all particulars of this discovery.

To go to another subject, I have devoted much of my time during the year past to the perfecting of a new small and compact apparatus by which energy in considerable amounts can now be flashed through interstellar space to any distance without the slightest dispersion. I had in mind to confer with my friend George E. Hale, the great astronomer and solar expert, regarding the possible use of this invention in connection with his own researches. In the meantime, however, I am expecting to put before the Institute of France an accurate description of the devices with data and calculations and claim the Pierre Guzman Prize of 100,000 francs for means of communication with other worlds, feeling perfectly sure that it will be awarded to me. The money, of course, is a trifling consideration, but for the great historical honor of being the first to achieve this miracle I would be almost willing to give my life.

My most important invention from a practical point of view is a new form of tube with apparatus for its operation. In 1896 I brought out a high potential targetless tube which I operated successfully with potentials up to 4 million volts from '93 to '99. This device was adopted by many inventors

and with slight modifications it is employed even now in all research laboratories and scientific institutions here and in other countries, and virtually all atomic investigations are carried on with it. At a later period I managed to produce very much higher potentials up to 18 million volts, and then I encountered unsurmountable difficulties which convinced me that it was necessary to invent an entirely different form of tube in order to carry out successfully certain ideas I had conceived. This task I found far more difficult than I had expected, not so much in the construction as in the operation of the tube. For many years I was baffled in my efforts, although I made a steady slow progress. Finally though, I was rewarded with complete success and I produced a tube which it will be hard to improve further. It is of ideal simplicity, not subject to wear and can be operated at any potential, however high, that can be produced. It will carry heavy currents, transform any amount of energy within practical limits, and it permits easy control and regulation of the same. I expect that this invention, when it becomes known, will be universally adopted in preference to other forms of tubes, and that it will be the means of obtaining results unbreamed of before. Among others, it will enable the production of cheap radium substitutes in any desired quantity and will be, in general, immensely more effective in the smashing of

atoms and the transmutation of matter. I am hopeful that it will be possible by its use to carry out a process in which there should be no misses whatever, but only hits. However, this tube will not open up a way to utilize atomic or sub-atomic energy for power purposes. According to the physical truth I have discovered there is no available energy in atomic structures, and even if there were any, the input will always greatly exceed the output, precluding profitable, practical use of the liberated energy.

Some papers have reported that I had promised to give a full description of my tube and its accessories on the present occasion. This has caused me considerable annoyance, for, owing to some obligations I have undertaken regarding the application of the tube for important purposes, I am unable to make a complete disclosure now. But as soon as I am relieved of these obligations a technical description of the device and of all the apparatus will be given to scientific institutions.

There is one more discovery which I want to announce at this time, consisting of a new method and apparatus for the obtainment of vacua exceeding many times the highest heretofore realized. I think that as much as one-billionth of a micron can be attained. What may be accomplished by means of such vacua is a matter of conjecture, but it is obvious that they will make possible the production of much more intense

effects in electron tubes. My ideas regarding the electron are at variance with those generally entertained. I hold that it is a relatively large body carrying a surface charge and not an elementary unit. When such an electron leaves an electrode of extremely high potential and in very high vacuum it carries an electrostatic charge many times greater than the normal. This may astonish some of those who think that the particle has the same charge in the tube and outside of it in the air. A beautiful and instructive experiment has been contrived by me showing that such is not the case, for as soon as the particle gets out into the atmosphere it becomes a blazing star owing to the escape of the excess charge. The great quantity of electricity stored on the particle is responsible for the difficulties encountered in the operation of certain tubes and the rapid deterioration of the same.